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THE RYERSON LIBRARY

I. ITS EVOLUTION

The starting point of this history is a modest advertisement found in a school prospectus issued December 24, 1880, under the name of the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, the name borne by the Art Institute of Chicago during the first three years of its corporate existence, 1879-1882.

The advertisement reads as follows; "The school library has attained respectable dimensions, and circulates freely among the students." That is all that is said; but reports of later date show that some provision had already been made for the increase of the collection. A matriculation fee of \$2.00 was paid by each student, with the understanding that it should be added to a fund for the purchase of such books as would be helpful in connection with the work of an art school.

The growth of the collection was slow at first, depending, as it did, almost entirely on this small fund; but in 1884, with about 200 volumes, it might have overflowed its bookcase in the office of the Secretary (now the Director) but for the fact that it was kept in lively circulation. For the school was growing faster than the library, since each student contributed \$2.00 to the purchase fund only at the beginning of his first term, while the majority continued their studies during several terms. The school library and the school, mutually helpful, continued growing, and in 1885, a neat eight-page catalogue was published. The books were still kept in the Director's office, and handed out to the students on demand; but the year 1887 witnessed the beginning of a practical recognition of the library's importance as a department of the Institute's work. In that year its field was extended by Mr. Wirt D. Walker's gift of 94 framed

photographs of the works of famous artists published by Adolph Braun. This movement was magnificently followed up in 1894-1898 by Dr. D. K. Pearson's gift of more than 16000 Braun photographs.

An unpublished report of the Director, dated June 5, 1888, contains the following items:

"Mrs. A. M. Hall Ellis, the donor of the collection of casts and our most munificent benefactor, has presented [\$1250, the Sumner Ellis Memorial Fund] for the purchase of books * * * In consultation with Mrs. Ellis this money has been spent for standard works on art. Added to this school library these works constitute the nucleus of a reference library upon art, the value of which is attested by its constant use by students, members and visitors.

"In January Mrs. E. S. Stickney presented * * the valuable collection of engravings made by her late husband; and, in April, added 17 framed engravings, with the promise of many more now hanging in her house." The promised additions and 11 bound volumes were received in 1897.

"Room XVIII [in the old building] has been fitted up for a library, by cutting a new window * * and providing bookcases, tables, matting, pictures and other appliances."

"The duties of a librarian have been added to those of the Director's Secretary, and a card catalogue * * has been begun. The number of volumes now in the library is about 500 and the cost has been about \$2200." This probably does not include the cost of the books presented.

These quotations clearly indicate a new departure; and subsequent reports will show that it was ably continued in the same direction.



THE RYERSON LIBRARY
The Art Institute of Chicago

In passing it may be well to explain the reference to Mrs. Ellis' gift of casts quoted above. The land and other property received from her in this connection, were from time to time turned into ready money and spent for the casts of sculpture forming the Elbridge G. Hall Collection. The whole amount of the fund thus provided and applied was \$17,430.14. It was not exhausted until 1895.

Since 1888 the library has found many other generous friends. A few of their gifts are named below:

1892. A collection of 91 bound volumes and 48 pamphlets, constituting the library of the Chicago Society of Decorative Art. Presented by the Society.

1894-1898. The Mrs. D. K. Pearsons Collection of 16,001 permanent carbon photographs of works of art in the principal European galleries, published by Braun, Clement & Cie., Dornach and Paris. Presented by Dr. D. K. Pearsons. These photographs, too numerous to be displayed in frames like those presented by Mr. Walker in 1887, are conveniently arranged for reference in cabinets with sliding shelves. The collection is an inexhaustible mine of information for artists, art students, collectors, lecturers and writers.

It is much to be regretted that the Institute has not been able to complete this valuable collection by the purchase of the photographs published by Braun since 1898. A few have been received as gifts, including the 64 reproductions of paintings owned or exhibited by the Institute, published and presented by the publishers in 1907.

1900. A valuable collection of works on art, largely *editions de luxe* published in sections. Presented by Mr. and Mrs.

S. M. Nickerson, the donors of the collection of paintings, prints and art objects, which fills three galleries of the museum.

1901. A collection of 27 volumes, chiefly standard Italian works on the Vatican Collections, Etc., published between 1782 and 1843.

There are others, Mr. Getty and Mr. Ryerson, for example, whose contributions of books scattered over several years would make considerable collections if brought together.

The liberal contributions of books, a glimpse of which is given above, are paralleled by the gifts of money for the purchase of books. The Sumner-Ellis Memorial Fund of \$1250 was received in 1887. The principal of this fund was spent at once, as noted above. Since 1903 many books have been purchased with the interest of unappropriated funds previously established by John Quincy Adams, Frances E. Ogden, B. Lowenthal, T. D. Lowther and Huntington W. Jackson. In each of the years 1904, 1905, 1906, 1908, Martin A. Ryerson gave \$1,000 to be spent directly for books.

At this point in the story a look backward is desirable. In the year 1900 something more than \$60,000 was received from Mr. Ryerson for an addition to the building begun in 1899—a pavilion in the vacant south court. In October, 1901, the pavilion was finished and the library, installed therein, was for the first time really in possession of "a local habitation and a name." It is no longer merely the school library. It is now the Ryerson Library, a public institution of recognized value to all persons interested in art. A description of its beautiful and commodious habitation was published in the annual report of 1902.

G. C.

To be Continued.